

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10  
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 ICA-20 SP-02  
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P R 280852Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1974  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TIPOLI

UNCLAS TUNIS 5334

BRUSSELS FOR USEC-LABATT  
PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: ELAB, PGOV, TS  
SUBJ: SFAX TRIAL OF TWELVE UGTT MEMBERS - EIGHT  
CONVICTIONS AND FOUR ACQUITTALS

1. ONE-DAY TRIAL OF 12 UGTT MEMBERS ARRESTED IN SFAX IN  
WAKE OF JANUARY GENERAL STRIKE OPENED IN SFAX CRIMINAL  
COURT MORNING OF JULY 26. VERDICT ISSUED BY COURT AT  
11:00 P.M. WAS EIGHT CONVICTIONS FOR TWO-YEAR PRISON  
TERMS (THREE SUSPENDED SENTENCES) AND FOUR ACQUITTALS.  
ACCUSED WERE MOSTLY LABORERS OR MINOR LOCAL CIVIL SERVANTS  
AND TRIAL DID NOT INVOLVE ANY OF PRINCIPAL FIGURES IN  
JANUARY EVENTS OR ANY HIGH-LEVEL UGTT OFFICERS. PRINCIPAL  
GOVERNMENT CHARGE WAS ACCUSED'S INTENT TO COMMIT ACTS  
OF VIOLENCE ON PERSONS AND PROPERTY.

2. GOVERNMENT'S CASE RESTED ON PREMISE THAT APPREHENSION  
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OF ACCUSED IN SFAX UNION HALL WITH CACHE OF WEAPONS DEMON-  
STRATED INTENT TO COMMIT ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISTURB  
PUBLIC ORDER. DECISION TO TAKE PART IN LOCAL STRIKE  
ON JANUARY 25 WAS ALSO CITED AS PROOF OF ACCUSED'S  
ANTI-REGIME ATTITUDES. NO SPECIFIC ACTS OF VIOLENCE WERE  
CITED HOWEVER.

3. DEFENSE ATTORNEYS CLAIMED NO MATERIAL EVIDENCE OF CRIME EXISTED AND DENIED ANY CRIMINAL INTENTIONS OR POSSESSION OF WEAPONS. ACCUSED CLAIMED THEY WERE GATHERED IN UNION HALL TO PROTECT IT AGAINST ATTACKS SIMILAR TO THOSE MOUNTED AGAINST UGTT OFFICES IN SOUSSE AND ELSEWHERE. THEY ALSO HELD THAT WHAT PROSECUTION CLAIMED TO BE CLUBS WERE MERELY SUPPORTS FOR UNION BANNERS AND THAT "MOLOTOV COCKTAILS" DESCRIBED BY POLICE WERE BOTTLES OF GASOLINE STORED FOR USE IN UNION VEHICLES.

4. DEFENDANTS ALSO CONTRADICTED PROSECUTION CHARGE THAT JANUARY 25 STRIKE IN SFAX (CALLED TO PROTEST ARREST OF REGIONAL UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL ABDERRAZAK GHORBAL ON JANUARY 24) WAS ILLEGAL. ONE DEFENDANT (MOHAMED TRIKI) CLAIMED MISTREATMENT AT HANDS OF POLICE. TRIKI ALSO TOLD JUDGE HE HAD BEEN FORCED TO SIGN COMPROMISING STATEMENTS UNDER DURESS.

5. ACCORDING TO INDEPENDENT DIALY LE TEMPS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND SOME OUTSIDE OBSERVERS WERE INITIALLY BARRED FROM COURTROOM. DECISION WAS REVERSED AFTER ATTORNEYS THREATENED WALKOUT.

6. COURT'S DECISIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

A) TWO YEARS IN PRISON:  
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MOHAMED CHAABANE, CIVIL SERVANT, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
MOHAMED TRIKI, CIVIL SERVANT, NATIONAL OLIVE OIL OFFICE  
MONGI NASRI, LABORER  
MOHAMED KADRI, MESSENGER  
ABDELKADER BEN TAHAR, VEGETABLE MERCHANT

B) TWO YEARS IN PRISON (SUSPENDED SENTENCE):

MOHAMED FETHI BOUKADI, LABORER  
MOHAMED AYOUB, CIVIL SERVANT

MONCEF MAALOUL, BOOKKEEPER

C) ACQUITTED:

MORCHED BOUKADI, LABORER  
MOHAMED FAKHFAKH, BUS DRIVER  
TAHAR TALBI, NIGHT GUARD  
HEDI FRIKHA, BUS DRIVER

7. MUCH LARGER TRIAL OF OVER 100 PERSONS ARRESTED IN

CONNECTION WITH EVENTS OF JANUARY 26 IS STILL SCHEDULED  
TO OPEN IN SOUSSE ON JULY 31. NO DATE HAS BEEN FIXED  
FOR TRIAL OF ACHOUR AND OTHER SENIOR UGTT MEMBERS.  
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## Message Attributes

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